

## Message Text

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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

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DAMASCUS PASS CODEL MCGOVERN

E.O. 11652: N/A DECON 4-1-76

TAGS: OREP (MCGOVERN, GEORGE)

SUBJECT: CODEL MCGOVERN VISIT TO LEBANON

SUMMARY: CODEL MCGOVERN'S THREE-DAY VISIT TO LEBANON SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL FROM STANDPOINT OF HIS DESIRE TO GAIN FIRST-HAND INSIGHTS INTO LEBANESE AND PALESTINIAN THINKING RE ME SETTLEMENT ISSUES AND CURRENT AREA SITUATION. IT WAS MARRED IN OUR VIEW, HOWEVER, BY FACT THAT SEVERAL LEBANESE PERSONALITIES WITH WHOM CODEL HAD BEEN IN ADVANCE CONTACT USED SENATOR MCGOVERN'S VISIT AS OCCASION TO INDULGE IN SELF-SERVING PUBLICITY, WITHOUT SCRUPLING TO VIOLATE SENATOR'S PRIVACY AND DISTORT HIS VIEWS IN THE PROCESS.  
END SUMMARY

1. HIGHLIGHTS OF CODEL MCGOVERN'S 72-HOUR VISIT TO LEBANON INCLUDED MAR 27 MEETING WITH LEBANESE FORMIN TAQLA (BEIRUT 4009), TWO WORKING LUNCHES HOSTED BY AN NAHAR PRESS MAGNATE GHASSAN TUEINI MAR 27 AND BY FORMER DEPUTY KHALIL AL KHOURY MAR 28, STAG DINNER AT AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE MAR 28, AND MEETING EVENING MAR 28 WITH  
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PLO CHAIRMAN 'ARAFAT (BEIRUT 4044 NOTAL. CODEL ALSO MET

WITH VARIOUS PALESTINIAN PERSONALITIES AT MAR 27 DINNER HOSTED BY DR. CLOVIS MAQSUD, WHO NEXT DAY ACCOMPANIED CODEL ON VISIT TO BURJ AL BARAJNEH REFUGEE CAMP ON OUTSKIRTS OF BEIRUT. UNFORTUNATELY, CODEL'S SCHEDULED MEETING MAR 27 WITH PRES. FRANGIE WAS CANCELLED BY LATTER AT LAST MINUTE ON GROUNDS THAT "URGENT BUSINESS" HAD FORCED HIM TO CURTAIL ALL APPOINTMENTS FOR TWO DAYS.

2. SENATOR MCGOVERN GENERALLY AVOIDED FORMAL PRESS CONTACTS, ON SENSIBLE GROUNDS THAT HIS FACT-FINDING MISSION WAS BY NO MEANS COMPLETED AND HE HAD NOT AS YET FORMULATED CONCLUSIVE VIEWS RE CURRENT ME SITUATION IN GENERAL AND PALESTINIAN PROBLEM IN PARTICULAR. IN HIS PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS, SENATOR REPEATEDLY MADE CLEAR HE REMAINS FRIEND OF ISRAEL SUPPORTER OF ITS RIGHT TO EXIST, AND AN OPPONENT OF TERRORISM IN ANY FORM. HOWEVER, HE ALSO EMPHASIZED HIS INCREASED INTEREST OF LATE IN PALESTINIANS, WHOSE ASPIRATIONS HE HAD COME TO REALIZE ARE CENTRAL TO AND MUST BE PROVIDED FOR IN ANY JUST SETTLEMENT OF ME CONFLICT. ALTHOUGH HE WAS CLEARLY EAGER TO GAIN FIRST-HAND INSIGHTS INTO LEBANESE AND PALESTINIAN THINKING ON VARIETY OF ME SETTLEMENT ISSUES, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO POSSIBLE CREATION OF PALESTINIAN STATE IN WEST BANK/GAZA, HE WAS CAREFUL TO AVOID PRONOUNCING FIRM CONCLUSIONS ON SUCH ISSUES AT THIS POINT. ALL IN ALL, BASED ON OUR OWN OBSERVATION AND WHAT WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GAIN IN WAY OF FEEDBACK FROM PERSONS WHO PARTICIPATED IN CODEL'S ABOVE-MENTIONED LUNCHEONS/MEETINGS (AT MOST OF WHICH NO REPORTING MEMBERS WERE PRESENT), WE GATHER THAT SENATOR MCGOVERN SUCCEEDED IN ELICITING INTERESTING AND WORTHWHILE VIEWS FROM BROAD RANGE OF ARTICULATE LEBANESE AND PALESTINIAN PERSONALITIES, PARTICULARLY (AND SOMETIMES IN RATHER DISCORDANT FASHION), FROM THE LATTER.

3. TO OUR DISMAY, CODEL'S PRESENCE IN LEBANON WAS SEIZED UPON BY IMPORTANT SEGMENT OF BEIRUT PRESS-NOTABLY TUEINI'S AN NAHAR AND L'ORIENT-LE JOUR-TO FURTHER THEIR PETTY FEUDS WITH FRANGIE REGIME, SENSATIONALIZE ON SENATOR'S ALLEGED COMMENTS RE PALESTINE PROBLEM, AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GENERALLY TAKE CREDIT FOR HAVING GAINED "INSIDE KNOWLEDGE" REGARDING (AND IMPLICITLY FOR HAVING HELPED INFLUENCE) MCGOVERN'S ALLEGEDLY PRO-ARAB OPINIONS. L'ORIENT-LE JOUR ON MAR 28 LOST NO TIME IN REPORTING (FALSELY) THAT PRES. FRANGIE HAD "REFUSED" TO MEET WITH CODEL. NAHAR REPORTED (ACCURATELY) THAT AT MAR 27 WORKING-LUNCHEON HOSTED BY TUEINI, SENATOR HAD ASKED HIS INTERLOCUTORS TO TREAT THEIR DIALOGUE AS PRIVILEGED. HOWEVER, PAPER THEN

PROCEEDED TO CLAIM THAT SENATOR HAD PRONOUNCED HIMSELF IN FAVOR OF CREATION OF AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE. NOT TO BE OUTDONE, L'ORIENT-LE JOUR HEADLINED ON MAR 29 THAT MCGOVERN, IN HIS MAR 28 WORKING-LUNCHEON AT KHALIL KHOURY'S, HAD ANNOUNCED HIS INTION TO ELABORATE A "MCGOVERN PLAN" FOR SOLUTION OF ME CONFLICT, AS WELL AS HAVING ADVOCATED DIRECT CONTACTS BETWEEN USG AND PLO. NAHAR AND SEVERAL OTHER PAPERS ON MAR 29 GAVE PROMINENCE TO CODEL'S MEETING WITH 'ARAFAT (MAQSUD INTERPRETING), IN WHICH PLO LEADER WAS PORTRAYED AS HAVING LECTURED SENATOR RE JUSTICE OF PALESTINIAN CAUSE, LOGIC OF PLO'S GOAL OF DEMOCRATIC SECULAR PALESTINIAN STATE, AND NECESSITY OF DISTRUSTING ISRAELI INTENTIONS TO WITHDRAW FROM OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORY. ACCORDING TO NAHAR, MCGOVERN IN RETURN AGREED THAT THE PALESTINIAN "REALITY" COULD NO LONGER BE IGNORED BY US POLICY-MAKERS, THAT USG MUST SERIOUSLY CONSIDER "RECOGNIZING" PLO, AND THAT A "PALESTINIAN NATIONAL ENTITY" MUST BE ESTABLISHED (BEIRUT 4048 NOTAL.

4. COMMENT: SHOULD BE EMPHASIZED THAT FOREGOING PRESS COVERAGE NOT ONLY CONSTITUTED BLATNANT VIOLATIONS BY LOCAL PERSONALITIES--PARTICULARLY CODEL'S "SEMI-HOSTS" TUEINI, KHOURY AND TO CERTAIN EXTENT MAQSUD--OF SENATOR'S REPEATED REQUESTS FOR CONFIDENTIALITY, BUT IT ALSO (AND MORE UNFAIRLY) DISTORTED AND EVEN FABRICATED HIS VIEWS TO POINT WHERE HE WAS MADE TO APPEAR AS PARTISAN SUPPORTER OF ARAB CAUSE IN GENERAL AND PALESTINIAN CAUSE IN PARTICULAR. A RESULT OF CODEL MCGOVERN'S EXPERIENCE, WE HOPE DEPT AND CONRESSIONAL FIGURES WILL EXERCISE GREATER CAUTION IN FUTURE IN ENCOURAGING OFFICIAL US VISITORS TO LEBANON TO INVOLVE THEMSELVES WITH PERSONS HERE WHO--HOWEVER EMINENT THEIR REPUTATIONS--HAVE AXES TO GRIND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ON LOCAL POLITICAL SCENE. HAVING SAID THIS, E CAN ONLY REPEAT OUR ASSESSMENT THAT CODEL MCGOVERN OTHERWISE APPEARED TO SPEND AN INFORMATIVE AND PROFITABLE THREE DAYS IN LEBANON, ONE WHICH WE BELIEVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO CODEL'S OVERALL FACT-FINDING EFFORT IN ME, AND TO THIS EMBASSY'S OBJECTIVES HERE. GODLEY

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